AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1.-9. (Cancelled)

10. (Previously presented) A method for facilitating retention of a computer input device that is used for navigation among web pages that are accessible via a Global Information Network, said method comprising the steps of:

(1) providing the computer input device for facilitating navigation to web sites and among web pages, wherein the computer input device includes at least one touch-sensitive surface whereby data is input to the computer input device;

(2) providing a browser terminal that is controllable by the computer input device, wherein the browser terminal includes a visual display and a web browser for accessing the web sites and displaying the web pages;

(3) selecting an image to be disposed on the at least one touch-sensitive surface; and

(4) disposing the image selected by the owner on the at least one touch-sensitive surface of the computer input device, to thereby personalize the computer input device, and thereby influence the owner to keep and use the computer input device.

11. (Previously presented) The method as defined in claim 10 wherein the step of selecting an image further comprises the step

of selecting the image as a brand of a sponsor of the computer input device.

12. (Previously presented) The method as defined in claim 11 wherein the method further comprises the steps of:

(1) disposing the brand of the sponsor on a plurality of computer input devices; and

(2) distributing the plurality of computer input devices to clients, customers and potential customers of the sponsor, wherein the clients, customers and potential customers will desire to move the branded computer input device to other computers because of the services provided by the computer input devices.

13. (Previously presented) The method as defined in claim 10 wherein the step of selecting an image further comprises the step of selecting the image as a personalized image that is personal to a user of the computer input device.

14. (Previously presented) The method as defined in claim 13 wherein the method further comprises the step of selecting the personalized image from the group of personalized images comprising photographs, artwork, or digital images.

15. (Previously presented) The method as defined in claim 10 wherein the method further comprises the step of selecting the computer input device from the group of computer input devices comprised of a touchpad, a stylus, a smart card reader, a voice-over-IP telephone, and a set of audio speakers.

16. (Previously presented) The method as defined in claim 10 wherein the method further comprises the step of providing a plurality of navigation options within the browser terminal, including the ability to scroll, move forwards and backwards through web pages, and zoom in and out of web pages.

17. (Previously presented) A method for facilitating navigation among websites and web pages that are accessible via the world wide web using a web navigation device, wherein the system facilitates access to a sponsor of the web navigation device, said method comprising the steps of:

(1) providing a peripheral linking device for facilitating navigation in the world wide web, wherein the peripheral linking device includes at least one programmable switch that when actuated performs an activity associated with web navigation;

(2) providing a browser terminal which is coupled to the peripheral linking device, and which displays information retrieved from the world wide web by using the peripheral linking

device;

(3) providing a linkbox, wherein the linkbox includes a database that associates the at least one programmable switch with a URL; and

(4) navigating the world wide web by providing input to the peripheral linking device to thereby control the browser terminal so as to display a web page associated with the URL.

18. (Previously presented) The method as defined in claim 17 wherein the method further comprises the steps of:

(1) actuating the at least one programmable switch to thereby generate a signal that is recognized by the linkbox;

(2) transmitting the signal to the linkbox;

(3) retrieving a URL from the linkbox that is associated with the at least one programmable switch;

(4) transmitting the URL from the linkbox to the browser terminal; and

(5) retrieving and displaying the contents of the web site associated with the URL retrieved from the linkbox.

19. (Previously presented) The method as defined in claim 18 wherein the method further comprises the steps of:

(1) providing a computer system on which the browser terminal operates; and

(2) providing client software on the computer system, wherein the client software prepares the signal for transmission to the linkbox.

20. (Previously presented) The method as defined in claim 19 wherein the step of generating the signal further comprises the steps of:

(1) including a unique identification of the peripheral linking device;

(2) including an identity of the sponsor; and

(3) including a link number that identifies which of the at least one programmable switches was actuated.

21. (Previously presented) The method as defined in claim 20 wherein the step of transmitting the URL from the linkbox to the browser terminal further comprises the steps of:

(1) performing a look-up operation in a table that associates link numbers and corresponding URLs for a specific peripheral linking device;

(2) creating a tag, wherein the tag identifies a visitor to a web site as being directed to the web site from the peripheral linking device; and

(3) transmitting the URL and the tag to the browser terminal.

22. (Previously presented) The method as defined in claim 21 wherein the method further comprises the steps of:

(1) utilizing the URL to retrieve and display contents of the web site associated with the URL retrieved from the linkbox; and

(2) transmitting the tag to the web site to thereby enable the web site to record access to the web site from the peripheral linking device.

23. (Previously presented) The method as defined in claim 22 wherein the method further comprises the steps of:

(1) providing a plurality of sponsor counters in the linkbox;

(2) incrementing one of the plurality of sponsor counters whenever the peripheral linking unit accesses a web site that corresponds to the web site that is accessed; and

(3) determining a fee to be paid to a provider of the peripheral linking device based on a total number of times that the web site of a sponsor is accessed by utilizing the peripheral linking device.

24. (Previously presented) The method as defined in claim 23 wherein the method further comprises the step of date stamping a

time on each increment of the plurality of sponsor counters to thereby prevent double-billing of the sponsor.

25. (Previously presented) The method as defined in claim 24 wherein the method further comprises the step of providing faster access to the database by caching the database on a local device that does not require access to the linkbox in order to provide faster access to the web site.

26. (Previously presented) The method as defined in claim 25 wherein the method further comprises the step of caching the database from the linkbox on the computer system.

27. (Previously presented) The method as defined in claim 25 wherein the method further comprises the step of caching the database from the linkbox on the peripheral linking device.

28. (Previously presented) The method as defined in claim 27 wherein the method further comprises the step of updating the linkbox database with information for the plurality of sponsor counters.

29. (Previously presented) The method as defined in claim 28 wherein the method further comprises the step of periodically

updating the linkbox database that is stored locally on the computer system or the peripheral linking device.

30. (Previously presented) The method as defined in claim 28 wherein the method further comprises the step of blocking transmission of the unique identification of the peripheral linking device, to thereby prevent tracking of web access performed by utilizing the peripheral linking device.

31. (Previously presented) The method as defined in claim 30 wherein the method further comprises the step of offering incentives to a user of the peripheral linking device to allow tracking of world wide web usage when utilizing the peripheral linking device, to thereby compile user statistics for others.

32. (Previously presented) The method as defined in claim 31 wherein the method further comprises the step of offering increasing levels of incentives based upon a level of tracking that the user permits regarding tracking of the world wide web usage.

33. (Previously presented) The method as defined in claim 20 wherein the method further comprises the steps of:

(1) providing a plurality of programmable switches on the

peripheral linking device having the at least one programmable switch; and

(2) providing a web site for associating each of the plurality of programmable switches with a particular URL.

34. (Previously presented) The method as defined in claim 33 wherein the method further comprises the steps of:

(1) selecting one of the plurality of the programmable switches from a menu on the web site;

(2) manually entering a URL that is to be associated with the selected one of the plurality of the programmable switches; and

(3) recording the URL that is to be associated with the selected one of the plurality of the programmable switches.

35. (Previously presented) The method as defined in claim 34 wherein the method further comprises the steps of:

(1) selecting one of the plurality of the programmable switches from a menu on the web site;

(2) selecting a URL that is to be associated with the selected one of the plurality of the programmable switches from a menu; and

(3) recording the URL that is to be associated with the selected one of the plurality of the programmable switches.

36. (Previously presented) A system for providing access to a preprogrammed website on a global information network from a peripheral linking device that is programmed to at least provide direct access to the preprogrammed website, said system comprising:

a peripheral linking device;

at least one programmable button on the peripheral linking device;

a computer system that receives input from the peripheral linking device, and which has access to the Internet; and

a linkbox disposed on the Internet, wherein the linkbox includes a database for the peripheral linking device that associates an address of the website with the at least one programmable button, wherein actuating the at least one programmable button on the peripheral linking device causes the linkbox to send to the computer system an address of the website, and to display the contents of the web site on a computer display.

37. (Previously presented) The system as defined in claim 36 wherein the system further comprises selecting the peripheral linking device from the group of peripheral linking devices comprised of a touchpad, a stylus, a smart card reader, a voice-

over-IP telephone, and a set of audio speakers.

38. (Previously presented) The system as defined in claim 37 wherein the at least one programmable button can be programmed to execute a computer program on the computer system, or to provide a web site address to the computer system.

39. (Previously presented) The system as defined in claim 38 wherein the at least one programmable button can be locked such that a function performed thereby cannot be changed.

40. (Previously presented) The system as defined in claim 39 wherein the function performed by the at least one programmable button can be changed by providing a password.

41. (Previously presented) The system as defined in claim 40 wherein the computer system further comprises a browser terminal and the computer display, wherein the browser terminal receives a URL and displays data from a web site specified by the URL on the computer display.

42. (Previously presented) The system as defined in claim 41 wherein the linkbox database further comprises a unique identification for each peripheral linking device, sponsor

identities, and a list of link numbers associated with each peripheral linking device that identifies which of the at least one programmable switches was actuated.

43. (Previously presented) The system as defined in claim 42 wherein the system further comprises:

a plurality of sponsor counters for counting the number of times that the peripheral linking device directs a user to a sponsor web site; and

a date stamp that is associated with each of the plurality of sponsor counters to thereby prevent double-billing of the sponsor.

44. (Previously presented) The system as defined in claim 43 wherein the system further comprises a memory unit for storing the linkbox database locally such that the user does not need to access the linkbox database over the global information network in order to obtain a URL of a web site to be visited.

45. (Previously presented) The system as defined in claim 44 wherein the memory unit for storing the linkbox locally further comprises a file on the computer system.

46. (Previously presented) The system as defined in claim 45

wherein the memory unit for storing the linkbox locally further comprises a memory device in the peripheral linking device, such that the memory unit will travel with the peripheral linking unit when it is moved to a different computer system.

47. (Previously presented) The system as defined in claim 45 wherein the system further comprises a plurality of programmable switches on the peripheral linking device having the at least one programmable switch, wherein a web site is associated with each of the plurality of programmable switches with a particular URL.

48. (Cancelled) A system for facilitating navigation among websites and web pages at the websites that are accessible via the web, said system comprising:

a peripheral linking device for facilitating navigation in the world wide;

a browser terminal which is coupled to the peripheral linking device, and which displays information retrieved from the world wide web by using the peripheral linking device; and

a merchant database which is hosted at a merchant database website and which displays merchant information, wherein the peripheral linking device navigates to the merchant database to thereby display the merchant information on the browser terminal.

49. (Cancelled) A system for facilitating navigation among websites and web pages at the websites that are accessible via the web, said system comprising:

a peripheral linking device for facilitating navigation in the world wide web, wherein the peripheral linking device includes:

at least one touch-sensitive surface whereby data is input to the peripheral linking device; and

at least one switch which performs an activity associated with web navigation;

a browser terminal which is coupled to the peripheral linking device, wherein the browser terminal includes:

a visual display; and

a web browser for accessing the websites and displaying the web pages; and

a merchant database which is hosted at a merchant database website and which displays merchant information, wherein the peripheral linking device navigates to the merchant database to thereby display the merchant information on the browser terminal.

50. (Cancelled) A method for facilitating navigation among websites and web pages that are accessible via the world wide web, wherein the system facilitates e-commerce, said method comprising the steps of:

(1) providing a peripheral linking device for facilitating navigation in the world wide web, wherein the peripheral linking device includes at least one touch-sensitive surface whereby data is input to the peripheral linking device, and wherein the at least one touch-sensitive surface includes an image disposed thereon, and at least one switch which performs an activity associated with web navigation;

(2) providing a browser terminal which is coupled to the peripheral linking device, and which displays information retrieved from the world wide web by using the peripheral linking device; and

(3) navigating the world wide web by providing input to the peripheral linking device to thereby control the browser terminal so as to display desired web pages.

51. (Currently amended) ~~The method as defined in claim 50 wherein the method further comprises the steps of:~~ A method for facilitating navigation among websites and web pages that are accessible via the world wide web, wherein the system facilitates e-commerce, said method comprising the steps of:

(1) providing a peripheral linking device for facilitating navigation in the world wide web, wherein the peripheral linking device includes at least one touch-sensitive surface whereby data is input to the peripheral linking device, and wherein the at

least one touch-sensitive surface includes at least one switch which performs an activity associated with web navigation;

(2) selecting an image to dispose on the touch-sensitive surface;

~~(2)~~ (3) applying an adhesive to the touch-sensitive surface; ~~and~~

~~(3)~~ (4) disposing the image ~~to~~ on the touch-sensitive surface such that the image is held in place by the adhesive;

(5) providing a browser terminal which is coupled to the peripheral linking device, and which displays information retrieved from the world wide web by using the peripheral linking device; and

(6) navigating the world wide web by providing input to the peripheral linking device to thereby control the browser terminal so as to display desired web pages.

52. (Previously presented) The method as defined in claim 51 wherein the method further comprises the steps of:

(1) removing the image from the touch-sensitive surface;

(2) selecting a new image; and

(3) disposing the new image on the touch-sensitive surface, to thereby customize the peripheral linking device as desired.

53. (Previously presented) The method as defined in claim 52

wherein the method further comprises the step of customizing the peripheral linking device by prominently disposing a design that is associated with a particular merchant on the touch-sensitive surface to thereby indicate sponsorship of the peripheral linking device.